

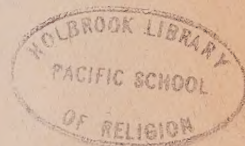
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CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EASTERN
EUROPEAN CHURCHES

from the East-European desk of the World Council of Churches

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Introduction

The conflict between religion and atheism in the USSR has again come to the fore. Leading papers like the "Voprosy Filosofii" and "The Communist" are publishing articles advocating a more intensive struggle against religion. At the same time religion in Russia is spreading, although the atheist press says that "there is no proof that its efforts are successful". But at the same time it complains that "too many people still cannot make up their minds to give up their religion once and for all" even if they no longer go to church. In view of "the extraordinary achievements of the socialist-communist system in the state and the economic order" the number of definite atheists is still too small "to exercise a decisive influence" upon the masses who still believe, or half-believe.

So there are still people in the socialist countries who cannot make up their minds "to become definite atheists", although they do not belong to any church. And public opinion criticises them; it insists that "this evil must be remedied".

It is difficult to arrive at an objective description of religious life in the Soviet Union, as in the other socialist countries, because the different churches and religions do not publish much which would prove that religious life is growing. But all the representatives of religion confirm that "there is no legal obstacle to freedom of worship". There is no open struggle between religious circles and atheism, and this is a cause of regret to atheists.

Thus religious convictions on the one hand are confronted by what seems to be a growth of atheism on the other. But the antagonism between faith and atheism must be taken seriously, because atheism is certain that it will ultimately conquer religion. As for the denunciations of religion in the press (in which atheism expresses its views, while religion says nothing) it is a fact that in its tone the anti-religious propaganda does not overstep the



limits imposed by law. The official view, while rejecting religion unequivocally, is that the feelings of believers must not be hurt. But sometimes atheist propaganda reverts to its earlier tone, maintaining that religion must be shown up as mere superstition, and especially as a form of exploitation of believers for the material interests of the Church.

For instance, cases are mentioned of a miraculous icon which brought in large sums of money to a certain Church, and of a spring of water which another Church claimed to have healing powers, etc.

In the monthly periodicals of the churches nothing is said about these miracles. Such arguments can hardly have much effect, therefore, for atheist propaganda. More stress is laid in the atheist press on the achievements of technics and science which increase people's sense of human freedom and are releasing them more and more from their involvement with religion. These articles always insist that religion is slowly but surely doomed to extinction.

The extracts and news-items which follow show how the pendulum swings backwards and forwards in the state of "co-existence" between the ideologies, especially in the USSR. They show that religion, especially the Christian Church, is not only conscious of the legal limits imposed upon it, but is also conscious of the spiritual freedom which secures its right to existence, without saying very much about "the Promise of the Church". The predominance of anti-religious extracts in the following pages may serve to give a general picture of the religious situation in the USSR.

Meeting of Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church with Members of the World Council of Churches in Utrecht

The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate in its September issue 1958 published the following report on the first meeting between representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches.

"The first official meeting between representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and leaders of the World Council of Churches was held from August 7th to 9th, 1958, at Utrecht, an ancient town in the Netherlands which has played a historical rôle in the life of Western Christianity.

The meeting was attended by His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolai of Krutitsi and Kolomna, His Excellency Bishop Michael of Smolensk and Dorobushsk accompanied by A.S. Buevsky (from the office of the Moscow Patriarchate for Foreign Relations) and V.S. Alekseev (the interpreter of that Department). The delegates from the World Council were: Dr. F.K. Fry (Chairman of the Central Committee of the WCC) who was head of the delegation, His Eminence Metropolitan James of Melita, and Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft (General Secretary of the WCC). The Secretaries attached to the WCC delegation were:

the Rev. Francis House (Assistant General Secretary) and Dr. F. Nolde (Chairman of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs). The interpreters for the WCC delegation were John Lawrence and A.F. Weymarn.

The WCC was formally constituted at the first great ecumenical Assembly held at Amsterdam in 1948. The Task of the ecumenical movement is the unification of Christians belonging to different churches. The WCC has its headquarters in Geneva. As a clearing-house for the activity of the confessional groups attached to the WCC this body wants to establish relations with the Russian Orthodox Church which has again and again been invited to discuss the common tasks of Christians today and ways of collaboration. As a result of an exchange of views through correspondence between the Moscow Patriarchate and the WCC, it was finally decided to hold a meeting between his Eminence Metropolitan Nicolai (representative of the Department of Foreign Relations of the Patriarchate) and representatives of the WCC.

The basic programme of deliberations prepared for the beginning of August in Utrecht included the following questions:

- 1) The Russian Orthodox Church and the ecumenical movement;
- 2) the problem of Christian unity for the defense and strengthening of peace;
- 3) the attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church to social and political questions;
- 4) the WCC and the One Church (of Christ);
- 5) the common concern of the churches for religious freedom.

The first three points were proposed by the Moscow Patriarchate, the last two by the WCC.

On August 6th the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church, headed by His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolai of Krutitsi and Kolomna, left Moscow by air for Amsterdam, where they arrived the same evening. At Schiphoof airport the Russian guests were welcomed by Dr. Fry (Chairman of the Central Committee of the WCC), Mr. House, Mr. Lawrence, Archimandrite Dionisii (Lukin) (priest of the West-European Exarchate of the Moscow Patriarchate in the Netherlands), and Father George Chretienne (priest of the Orthodox Church at The Hague), as well as by a number of members of the Russian Orthodox Church. A large group of representatives of the Dutch and international press were also at Schiphoof to welcome the arrivals, and Metropolitan Nicolai and Dr. Fry exchanged words of welcome.

From the airport the Russian delegates left for Utrecht, where rooms were reserved for them at the Hôtel des Pays-Bas. There Metropolitan Nicolai, Bishop Michael and their staff were received by Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft (General Secretary of the WCC), Dr. F. Nolde and A.F. Weymarn.

The Hôtel where the meetings were held is a historical place for the WCC. In May 1938 an ecumenical meeting held at this Hôtel approved the draft of the future Constitution of the WCC and

decided to coordinate the main branches of the ecumenical movement known as "Faith and Order" and "Life and Work" into one body. At the same conference Dr. Visser 't Hooft was appointed General Secretary of the WCC, then "in process of formation".

The first session opened next morning at 10 o'clock in the conference room of the Hôtel des Pays-Bas. Metropolitan James of Melita from Geneva arrived in Utrecht for this opening session, so that both delegations were complete. The session opened with a short prayer by Dr. F.K. Fry, followed by the reading of extracts from the correspondence between the Central Committee of the WCC and the Moscow Patriarchate prior to the meetings. A decision was taken as to the agenda of the meeting, which would be presided over by the leader of each delegation in turn. It was decided to have two meetings a day, i.e. about six working hours daily, and to take one meal a day together. Thus an atmosphere of collaboration and friendship was created at once and prevailed throughout the meetings.

Dr. Fry took the Chair at the first session, and his Eminence Metropolitan Nicolai reported on "The Russian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement". After expressing his satisfaction that it had been possible to hold this first meeting with representatives of the ecumenical movement, the Metropolitan suggested that questions of dogma and principle be postponed for consideration at a later session (as far as the agenda permitted). Bishop Michael, Metropolitan James, Dr. Fry and Dr. Visser 't Hooft participated in the discussion on the Metropolitan's report. Metropolitan James explained the attitude of the Patriarchate of Constantinople towards the ecumenical movement, emphasising the importance of active participation by the Orthodox Churches in the practical work of the WCC.

At the second meeting held the same day the Chair was taken by Metropolitan Nicolai, who reported on "The Problem of Christian Unity for the Defence of Peace". After his report the Metropolitan made a statement, on behalf of his delegation, concerning the events in the Near East, condemning the military intervention of the Anglo-Americans, and appealing to the WCC to collaborate in finding a solution to this conflict. Dr. Visser 't Hooft reported on "The Concern of the WCC for World Peace". He described the work of the Churches' Commission on International Affairs in strengthening peace, and stressed the fact that the WCC does its utmost to avoid infringing the political interests of any nation. Dr. Fry pointed out that the Commission on the Prevention of War in an Atomic Age was preparing a special report. Another report on this question would be prepared by the Churches' Commission on International Affairs. The members of the two delegations exchanged their views on the problem of the events in the Near East, and on ways of maintaining peace.

At the morning session on August 8th, Metropolitan James of Melita spoke on the WCC and Church Unity. He expressed the hope (on behalf of His Holiness Athenagoras, Patriarch of Constantinople) that contacts would be established between the Russian Orthodox Church and the WCC. During the discussion on this report Dr. Visser

't Hooft pointed out that the WCC is far from aiming at being a Super-Church. The WCC limits its rôle solely to mutual contacts between independent churches and confessional groups. At this session the different tasks confronting the WCC were defined. The history of the relation of the ecumenical movement to the Roman Church and its different branches in various countries was explained by members of the WCC delegation.

At the afternoon session the same day, Bishop Michael reported on "The Russian Orthodox Church and its attitude to socio-political Life". Dr. Visser 't Hooft spoke on the relation of the WCC to the same problem and quoted a number of documents illustrating this attitude. Metropolitan James of Melita expressed his approval of the basic principles of the Russian Orthodox Church and emphasised the desirability of its cooperation with the WCC.

Dr. Fry then reported on the Churches' concern for religious liberty. He gave a picture of the actual state of affairs in different countries of the world, and explained the practical aspect of the activity of the WCC for preserving the religious freedom of the different Christian confessions. After some discussion, the meeting closed.

The last session was held on the morning of August 9th, with Metropolitan Nicolai in the Chair. At the beginning of this session the participants approved the text of a common communiqué to be published after the meetings ... The question of future contacts between the Russian Orthodox Church and the WCC was then discussed. Dr. Fry reported that the WCC had already accepted a statement containing an invitation to the Russian Orthodox Church to send observers to the WCC Central Committee meetings. Metropolitan Nicolai pointed out that the proposals made by him on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church would now be submitted by him to the autocephalous Orthodox sister-churches (which discussed their common attitude towards the ecumenical movement at the Moscow Conference in 1948) for their consideration and approval. Dr. Visser 't Hooft then formulated the WCC's practical proposals. Metropolitan James expressed the conviction that God's blessing would remain on this meeting, which he described as an expression of true Christian communion in the spirit of love and mutual good will. The meeting closed with mutual expressions of gratitude. Prayers were said by Metropolitan Nicolai and Dr. Fry (as head of the Lutheran Church in the USA).

Throughout the deliberations the exchange of impressions took place in the form of lively, cordial discussion, and gifts were also exchanged between the delegations.

After the meetings Metropolitan Nicolai again brought up the question of the relation of the Russian Church to Anglo-American intervention in the Near East. It was decided that the concern of the Russian Church for the Christian Churches to cooperate in bringing this conflict to a conclusion would be reported by Dr. Fry to the Central Committee of the WCC at its next meeting at Nyborg (Denmark) during the second half of August, 1958.

Throughout the meetings, and throughout the stay of the Russian Church delegation in the Netherlands, its presence aroused great interest in the Dutch press."

Moscow Patriarchate prepared to cooperate with
the ecumenical movement

Professor Parisskij, Assistant Dean of the Theological Academy in Leningrad, attended the Conference of European Churches held at Nyborg (Denmark) in January, 1959, as delegate of the Russian Orthodox Church. He confirmed that the Moscow Patriarchate was prepared to cooperate with the ecumenical movement.

Professor Parisskij stated that the Orthodox Church in Russia regarded itself as a European Church and therefore shared their responsibility. He said, the Russian Orthodox Church wants to take part in all ecumenical conferences and other church meetings "whose purpose is truth, justice and love". The presence of a delegate from the Moscow Patriarchate in Nyborg was on the same line (he continued) as the first meeting between the Russian Orthodox Church and leaders of the WCC at Utrecht (Holland) in August 1958.

At one of the daily press conferences held at Nyborg, Professor Parisskij gave the following answers to questions raised by the press:

Question: Is this Conference regarded as a unique opportunity for making contact, or as an opportunity for continued contacts?

Answer: The Russian Church is prepared to cooperate with all institutions which can be considered as of positively in favour of ecumenical cooperation. It has already sent observers to previous conferences. And contacts have already taken place through correspondence. On some occasions delegations have been sent, and theological discussions have been held. It is the desire of our Church to establish good relations with Churches, politicians and governments.

Question: Does the Russian Orthodox Church regard itself as European, although its sphere of influence stretches into Asia?

Answer: The Russian Orthodox Church has its headquarters in Moscow, which belongs to Europe. That is why our Church shares the common responsibility for Europe. It regards itself as a European Church.

Question: Where do you think the best practical opportunities lie for cooperation with the Churches represented here?

Answer: What has already been begun must be developed further. We are prepared to take part in any projects and meetings whose purpose is truth, justice and love.

Question: Is the absence of the hierarchy at Nyborg itself intentional?

Answer: At the moment the Russian Church is celebrating its great festival (Christmas), and the priests have to be in their churches. Moreover the Russian Church does not make any sharp distinction between the hierarchy and the laity. (Here the interpreter, Archbishop Kiivit of Esthonia, added that Professor Parisskij, as Assistant Dean of the Theological Academy in Leningrad, occupies a very important position).

Question: Is there any kind of cooperation on ecumenical lines between the different Churches in the Soviet Union?

Answer: No, in the Soviet Union there is no ecumenical movement, but the Russian Orthodox Church lives on a friendly footing with the other Churches, e.g. the Lutherans and Baptists. Information is often exchanged between them, but there is no real cooperation.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Visit to the Protestant Churches in the USSR

At the beginning of December 1958 a delegation consisting of ten members of the Czech Ecumenical Council paid a visit to some of the churches in the Soviet Union, at the invitation of the Lutheran Churches of Esthonia and Latvia.

The delegates were received in Riga by Dr. Gustav Turs, Archbishop of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia, and by representatives of the city. In Esthonia they were welcomed by Archbishop Jaan Kiivit of the Lutheran Church, who then accompanied them to Russia. In Esthonia they were also received by the Minister for Religious Affairs and by Bishop John of the Orthodox Church. In both countries the delegates attended a number of services at which they preached in turns. "Wherever we went the churches were full, even at Communion services on week-days", according to their report. "Everywhere one felt how eager the congregations were to hear the message of ecumenical fellowship." In Leningrad too the delegates were brought in contact with the life of the Church, after they had visited several state factories in the Baltic Republics. The fundamental problems and tasks confronting the Church were discussed with Metropolitan Jeleverij of Leningrad and the directors of the Theological Academy.

In Moscow the delegation visited the Evangelical Christian Baptist Church and some of the Orthodox Churches. They were also received by the directors of the State Department for non-Orthodox Churches and by Kotov, General Secretary of the Soviet Peace Committee.

The Report of the delegation concludes by saying that "through their conversations with church-representatives and theologians in the Soviet Union their conviction was strengthened that the Church in the Communist state has permanent tasks to perform, and also that the Socialist social order offers opportunities for the Church to fulfil its task." The delegates also report on their impressions of the arrangements for social welfare in the Soviet Union.

The discussions with the Soviet church leaders centred round the question of peace, and they insisted again and again on the prohibition of atomic weapons.

"The visit of the delegates of the Czech Protestant Churches to the Churches in the Soviet Union was not merely a meeting between good friends. We can already say that it was a meeting between real brothers united in the common faith - the faith which applies Christian love to the solution of the urgent, fundamental problems confronting the world today."

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The Churches in the Carpathian Ukraine

Professor J.H. Hromadka, Dean of the Comenius Faculty in Prague, and B. Pospisil, Director of the Ecumenical Institution of the Comenius Faculty, paid a visit on the 4th and 5th December to the Reformed and Baptist Churches in the Carpathian Ukraine, at their invitation. The visit was arranged in connection with the Czech delegation's visit to the Soviet Union.

They report on their visit as follows. At Uzgorod (Ungwar), the main town in this district, they were received by Bishop Gencsy of the Reformed Church and by F.M. Mocarko, the Senior Presbyter of the Baptist Church. In addition to having talks with these brethren and their fellow-workers, they also visited Reformed churches in Strumkowka and Malé Ratkovce, thus getting to know something of the life (both religious and secular) in a district which belonged to Czechoslovakia before the second world war, and which is now a part of the Soviet Union "is being developed economically and culturally with amazing speed." In this district the Reformed Church has 40,000 registered members in 96 congregations, divided into three "Seniorates". The church-members play an active part in the work of the Church. With their own funds they are renovating their churches and church-buildings, which were badly damaged during the last war. The best testimony to the life of the congregations is that over 80% of all the young people are confirmed.

The Baptist Church in the district has over 5,000 baptised members, in 30 churches. Active evangelism is practised and new members are constantly joining the Church. Every church has its own preachers. The Church is in permanent contact with the State Council for Church Affairs in Moscow.

Thus these Churches are also cooperating in the common endeavour to meet the needs in this district, where the economic and cultural standards are often incredibly low, and where class-feeling and

national prejudice are strong. The present aim is to get rid of past injustices by creating fresh industries and mechanising agriculture. The visit from the delegates of the Czech Ecumenical Council was the first contact the churches there had had with sister-churches abroad, and we hope it will prove the beginning of cooperation in our common tasks."

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

New Bishop of Lutheran Church in Slovakia

Professor Stefan Katlovsky has been elected Bishop of the Eastern District of the Evangelical Church in Slovakia, Augsburgian Confession. Formerly he was Professor at the Slovak Protestant Faculty of Theology in Modra. His new seat is at Kosice. The head of the Western District of the Slovak Church is Bishop Louis Katina, who has his seat in Bratislava.

The Evangelical Church in Slovakia, A.B., consists of 327 parishes with 385 pastors. The Church is divided into an Eastern and a Western District and is under the jurisdiction of a General Committee. Altogether it has about 430,000 members.

The Committee on Worship has now drawn up suggestions to introduce a new order of service in the Evangelical Church in Slovakia, A.B. The purpose of the new order of service, in which the liturgy will be entirely in the Slovak language, is to bring it into line with the general form of service used in the Lutheran churches all over the world. The last time the order of service was thoroughly revised in 1911.

The suggestions of the Committee on Worship are to be brought before the General Synod for its approval and then introduced into the churches.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Bible Exhibition in Prague

An exhibition of the Holy Scriptures was organised in Prague under the title "The Book of Life". Many publications and documents taken from different archives in Prague were shown, in order to demonstrate the influence of the Bible as a creative force on the history of Czechoslovakia, Czech literature and art, etc. The exhibition is reported to have been well attended, proving that it was of interest not only to Christians but also to the general public.

FINLAND

Orthodox Church in Finland celebrates fortieth anniversary

Forty years ago the Orthodox Church in Finland received its independence, by a special decree passed by the Greek-Catholic Church. This jubilee was celebrated by a festival in Kuopio attended by Metropolitan James of Melita (representative of the Patriarchate in Constantinople) and Metropolitan Nikolai (representing the Moscow Patriarchate). Bishop Eino Sormunen (the Lutheran Bishop in Kuopio) was also present, and greetings were received from Urho Kekkonen, President of the Finnish Republic.

BULGARIA

Term opens at Theological Seminary, Sofia

133 students registered for the 1958/59 semester at the theological seminary, Sofia. 40 of them were accepted for a six years' course. 20 other applicants were accepted for a course of 3 years' training which has been started with the permission of the Holy Synod. In addition to theological and liturgical subjects, the course includes education in general culture. The opening of the new term was celebrated by the professors and students in the ancient monastery of Rila, near Sofia. A systematic tour of the Orthodox churches of Bulgaria may be included in the arrangements.

BULGARIA

Restoration and Extension of the Religious Academy of St. Clement of Ochrida

The Religious Academy of St. Clement of Ochrida started its winter semester on a broader basis. The premises had been extended and some of them had been restored, the curriculum had been extended, and there were more students.

At the opening session the Dean, Bishop Nikolai of Kakariopolsk, urged the students, as future servants of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, to draw spiritual strength for their work from faith in God and in His plan of salvation, so as to be able to fulfil their task. The future holds no material advantages in store for priests, but it offers them an opportunity to place themselves unreservedly in the Church's service and to bear witness of the Church through the beauty of their liturgy. As priests they also had the task of actively helping to maintain world peace and national autonomy "in the spirit of Jesus Christ, the great founder of peace."

BULGARIA

Orthodox Church Paper reports on WCC Central Committee

The publication of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, "Zerkoven Vestnik", of October 10th, 1958, contains a report on the meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches held last August at Nyborg (Denmark). The report is taken from the WCC's Ecumenical Press Service.

BULGARIA

Professor Zankov and the Christian Conference on World Peace at Prague

Dr. Stefan Zankov, the well-known ecumenical pioneer and professor of theology in Sofia (Bulgaria) recently attended the Christian Conference on World Peace held at Prague (Czechoslovakia). Professor Zankov attaches the greatest importance to his participation in this meeting, as is shown by the following extract from "Kostnicke Jiskry", the periodical of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren:

"For me the attendance at the Peace Conference at Prague was so important because I found there a unique opportunity to become acquainted with the present situation in the Western countries and churches ... Christians of all nations must cooperate if peace is to be ensured."

BULGARIA

Work for Unity and Peace in the Orthodox East

On the suggestion of the Secretariat of the Foreign Department of the German Protestant Church, Professor Stefan Zankov (member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia) has written a study on "Theological Literature in Bulgaria during the last ten years". It is written in German and was published in the "Neue Zeit", Berlin, on October 9th, 1958.

For centuries the Orthodox Churches and peoples in the East were the victims of invasion and cruel despotism under pagan Eastern rulers. They also suffered greatly from the invasions of the Crusaders from the Christian West.

But the last two world wars "brought the worst dangers ever experienced there, not only causing suffering and loss but exposing everyone's life to confusion, tension and division. One cannot utter too urgent a warning against the terrible menace of another world war involving nuclear weapons."

The danger is increased by people's indifference as they sit with folded hands, all too prone to leave everything to "fate", or to think that "war can be averted merely by talking." It is "the first and most sacred duty of all Christians to testify their faith in the Prince of Peace" (II. Thess. 3:16) by showing their readiness to take definite action and to make sacrifices. "We have full confidence in the help of the Prince of Peace as we perceive a great movement in the world to cooperate in establishing international peace, that we may be called children of God (Matt. 5:9). We do so even when we are reviled and persecuted for Christ's sake (Matt. 5. 10-11)."

This situation and this way are of particular importance for Orthodox Christians, because "they live mid-way between West and East on the international cross-roads." That is "why the two world wars started here;" and that is "why the movement to work for world peace started here too."

During the long history of the Bulgarian people the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, (which is recognised by all, including the Socialist leaders in Bulgaria) has been a national Church, and it still retains this character today. For centuries the Bulgarian people and the Bulgarian Church have suffered at the hands of religious and national enemies. In the 19th century the members of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church were among the first to support the national rebirth and the struggle for freedom. And "in modern times, during the two great wars, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church participated in the struggle for national liberation."

After the first world war and its aftermath, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church worked to preserve the liberty and the rights of the nation, and for Christian international understanding. At that time, with the blessing of the Orthodox Churches, the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches started work in the Balkan peninsula. (This organisation afterwards became part of the World Council of Churches). The World Alliance

had a national committee in Bulgaria, including some of the leaders of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and of the other Orthodox churches in South-East Europe; Archbishop Stefan, the head of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, was its President, and there were many Bishops, theological professors, pastors, outstanding church-members, and youth representatives on the Committee. Its Secretary was Professor Zankov.

At the same time, after the first world war all the Orthodox Churches in the Balkans participated officially in the ecumenical movement. The permanent representatives of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church were Archbishop Stefan of Sofia and Professor Zankov. All the Orthodox Churches worked with success in promoting the aims of the ecumenical movement.

Since the second world war the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has cooperated with the Russian Orthodox Church against the great menace presented by nuclear warfare. It advocates a just and durable peace, the reduction of armaments, and the peaceful settlement of international conflicts through negotiation, and most of all the creation of an atmosphere of international understanding. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church is working for these ends through every means in its power, both within Bulgaria and on the international plane (e.g. through the World Peace Council, the Stockholm Movement, etc.). In this it meets with the full recognition and support of the Bulgarian people and their leaders. In accordance with its nature and possibilities, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church supports the establishment of a just social order, and does its utmost to promote the work of the Socialist state and all the Socialist organisations.

In this work the Bulgarian Orthodox Church welcomed the initiative of the Czech Ecumenical Council in organising a Peace Conference in Prague in May 1958, to make preparations for an All-Christian Peace Congress.

"For me", writes Professor Zankov, "the attendance at the Peace Conference at Prague was so important because I found there a unique opportunity to become acquainted with the present situation in the Western countries and churches, and came into close contact with friends and colleagues old and new, which was very useful to me as a keen worker in the ecumenical movement. I was especially glad to have an opportunity for contacts and friendly discussions with the German delegates to the Peace Conference, all of whom I met personally for the first time, but with whose valuable theological and practical work in the church I was already well acquainted."

"Christians of all nations must cooperate if peace is to be ensured."

BULGARIA

"The Soviet Revolution ... one of the main forces
in preserving world peace"

In an article on "The October Revolution and the Idea of Peace" (published in the periodical of the Bulgarian Church "Crkoven Vestnik", Sofia) Bishop Jonas of Agatoniklia speaks of the revolution in Russia as having been one of the main forces in preserving world peace.

The purpose of the decree to introduce the new Soviet economic order into Russia in 1918 was "the immediate termination of the terrible first world war." The desire for peace thus expressed by the October revolution was "of great importance for future peace." World peace was not a one-sided peace, in the sense of the Pax Romana, for instance. Peace could not be divorced from reality, as Professor Emil Brunner once said. The Pax Romana of the Emperor Augustus grew up as a spiritual force for peace in the world, the earthly expression of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. The disciples of Jesus will carry the Lord's spirit of peace into the people's desire for peace.

Peace may be regarded subjectively as spiritual peace (continues Bishop Jonas), or objectively as social peace. Objective social peace depends on overcoming the exploitation of man by man and paving the way to a new social order. Many different forces today are working for international peace. The movement for peace founded by the Soviet power in 1948 joins its voice loudly in the choir of peace-makers all over the world. One of the noble voices in the choir (continues Bishop Jonas) is that of Albert Schweitzer, winner of the Nobel Prize, who has spent his life in Christian service for his neighbour, thus opening a door for God's creative power to enter the world. Other well-known advocates of peace are Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsi and Kolomna, Hewlett Johnson (Dean of Canterbury), Dr. Endikott (England), Pastor Niemöller (Germany), Professor Hromadka (Czechoslovakia) and others.

Christians should therefore welcome the October revolution in Russia (writes Bishop Jonas) and its historic intervention on behalf of world peace.

BULGARIA

"Religion - the exploiter of the workers"

A conference was held in the national theatre, Sofia, in October under the slogan "Marxism, Leninism and Religion". It was an evening for open discussion for the purpose of strengthening scientific atheist propaganda and was organised by the Communist committee in Sofia, which had enlisted a large number of propagandists, trade-unions and the Dimitrov Youth. Its slogan was "Religion, the exploiter of the Workers". The main theme was divided into subsidiary themes such as "The origin and nature of Religion and the religious sects", "Christianity, a religion of class", "Science and Religion on the Origins of the Universe", "Religion in the service of Imperialism", "The harmful influence of Religion on the social and political growth of Communism".

The participants were urged to recognise the reactionary character of religion as an implacable instrument in the social exploitation of the workers, and to realise that all forms of religion are enemies of progress. The conference also insisted that Christ never lived at all. It attacked the calendar of the Orthodox Church as invalid. It also urged that atheist propaganda be intensified, because at present it is inadequate.

BULGARIA

"Religion - an obstacle to the fulfilment of plans"

Religion is an obstacle to the fulfilment of plans; it prevents people from working whole-heartedly for "the good of the nation". This is the objection raised by "Wetscherni Nowini", one of the government papers in Sofia, which is intensifying its anti-religious propaganda against the Christians and Moslems in Bulgaria.

The paper says that "people waste too much time in attending religious festivals." The church-calendar is filled to overflowing with "hundreds and thousands of saints and apostles". In spite of the "healthy atheistic traditions" of the Bulgarian people, many people still left their work, "even at the busiest times on the farms, in order to attend church festivals and visit monasteries." The paper makes an urgent appeal "to break away from these harmful traditions, so as not to hold up the rise in our economic output."

HUNGARY

"The Christian teachers in Hungary give cause for anxiety"

The Christian teachers in Hungary are causing anxiety to the Communist régime there, because "they still remain true to their Church" in spite of all the atheistic propaganda. So states an article in "Kisalföld", a paper published in Raab. The paper says it is inadmissible for "teachers who give instruction in the materialistic spirit to attend church in their spare time". Some teachers (says the paper) carry out their professional duties very well, but nevertheless maintain that their inner convictions will not yet allow them to stop attending church. This problem cannot be solved by edict (says the paper). One must "give the teachers an opportunity to conquer themselves and to adopt the ideology of materialism as their own."

HUNGARY

Bishop Ordass translating a play by Kaj Munk

Bishop Lajos Ordass of Budapest who was forced to resign from his episcopal office is allowed to preach freely, but is not availing himself of this permission for health reasons. He spends most of his time translating the works of Scandinavian writers, reports Tage Morsing, a Danish pastor who was able to visit Bishop Ordass when he was in Hungary. At present the Bishop is translating a play entitled "An Idealist" written in 1943 by Kaj Munk, a Danish pastor who was killed by an agent of the Gestapo.

HUNGARY

State subsidies for Hungarian Churches

According to a report in the "Neue Zeit", the Officers of the General Convention of the Reformed Church of Hungary have sent a request to the government of the Hungarian People's Republic, asking it to settle the amount due for this year's budget in the form of a state subsidy. The government has granted this request. This will enable the salaries of the pastors and other church workers to be maintained as before.

Subsidies have also been granted to the Lutheran and Catholic Churches in Hungary.

HUNGARY

Bishop Zoltan Kaldy

In an address by Bishop Kaldy, the new Lutheran Bishop in Hungary (in succession to Bishop Ordass) he says: "We regret that we have received no spiritual help during the last two years from the Lutheran World Federation, which could have helped us to solve our problems here. In our view the reason was that the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches cannot get rid of the temptation to see our Church through the eyes of certain persons. We ask both these organisations to regard our Hungarian churches in future as included in the Communion of Saints."

Zoltan Kaldy, who is 39 years of age, was inducted as Bishop of the Southern Diocese of the Lutheran Church of Hungary.

POLAND

Baptist Preachers' Seminary in Poland

In 1960 the Baptists will be able to open a Seminary of their own in Poland, according to a delegate from Warsaw who attended a meeting of the Committee of European Baptists in Stockholm. Like the other theological students in Poland, the students attending this Seminary will be exempt from military service. There are 2,500 people in Poland who are members of Baptist churches.

POLAND

The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Problem of Birth Control

The statement recently made in London by Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, on "Family Planning" is quoted by the "Gazeta Robotnicza" in Wroclaw. In his statement Dr. Fisher commented on the attitude of the Church of England to birth control. "Gazeta Robotnicza" suggests that the attitude of the Church of England to this problem (as expressed in the statement of Dr. Fisher) should be taken into consideration by the Polish government.

POLAND

Scientific Discussion on Religious Questions

In the middle of October a conference consisting of delegates from all over Poland met in Cracow to discuss the basic questions of religion. This "scientific discussion" was arranged by the leaders of the Cracow branch of the Society of Atheists and Freemasons. The bi-monthly periodical of the Gnostic Society, "Euhemer", also helped to arrange it. The purpose of the conference was to consider the most effective ways of bringing philosophical criticism to bear upon religion, and employing it to the best advantage for propaganda. Since Poland is predominantly Catholic, the suggestions made for combatting the Christian faith were directed primarily against the Roman Catholic Church.

Nothing has yet been published about the results of this conference.

ROUMANIA

10th Anniversary of the integration of the Uniate
Catholic Church in Roumania with the
Orthodox Church

October 21 was the 10th anniversary of the integration of the Uniate Catholic Church in Roumania with the Orthodox Church, but the anniversary was ignored by official propaganda services.

On August 4, 1948 the official gazette, "Monitorul Oficial", published a law for the regulation of religion in Roumania, which reduced the number of Uniate bishops from six to two. Since the bishopric of Fagaras and Alba Iulia had been vacant since 1940, this in effect left only one, the Bishop of Cluj, in office.

The campaign of conversion culminated in October 1948, in the Uniate Congress of Cluj, attended by 38 priests who had been elected to represent some 1,750 Uniate clergy. 38 priests "accepted unanimously and with great enthusiasm ... the re-entry into the bosom of the Roumanian Orthodox Church and the severance of all ties with Papal Rome."

This was followed on October 21 by a mass meeting at Alba Iulia, the scene of the original union in 1698 between the Orthodox Church of Transylvania and the Catholic Church in Rome to form the Uniate Church. The leader of the 38 priests made a speech in front of the Orthodox Cathedral describing the alleged sufferings of the Roumanians at the hands of Rome. A layman then declared the break complete.

By the end of December 1948, no Uniate Church was open, some 100 priests had been deported to the Soviet Union, and over 300 were in Roumanian prisons. And on December 2 "Monitorul Oficial" published a decree declaring the Uniate Church of Roumania legally extinct.

By June 1953, three of the bishops had died as a result of the treatment they received in prison.

It was learnt in September 1958, that Metropolitan Alexandru Rusu, Bishop of Maramures, had recently been sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment with hard labour - virtually a life sentence, since he is 75 years old and known to be ill in Aiud prison. Over 100 former Uniate Church leaders and laymen are reported to have been tried and sentenced with him.

ROUMANIA

Marina Justinian under house-arrest

According to the latest reports, Marina Justinian, Patriarch of the Roumanian Orthodox Church, is under house-arrest. Rumour states that he has been taken from his home in Bucarest to an unknown destination, where he is being kept under police observation. Before the arrest of the Patriarch at least 145 clergy had already been imprisoned.

ROUMANIA

Some statistics about the Orthodox Church of Roumania

According to the latest statistics the Orthodox Church of Roumania has now about 12,000 priests. The number of monks and nuns is 6,156 living in 188 monasteries and convents. There are more nuns (about 4,480) than monks.

All of them are reported to be eager to share the life of the Roumanian people in accordance with the Evangelical principles of truth, brotherhood and peace. Furthermore the clergy is trying to cooperate in the preservation of peace. 6,000 members of the clergy belong to the Committee for the Preservation of Peace on Earth. The monasteries are centres for all kind of cooperative work, some of them producing rugs and carpets.

The Orthodox Church of Roumania has 6 special "schools for Church-singers" and seminarists, 2 special seminaries for nuns and 2 high theological institutes in Bucarest and Sibiu. Furthermore the church publishes 8 periodicals, 3 of which are issued by the Patriarchate, the other 5 by the dioceses.

The periodicals published by the Patriarchate are:

1) "Biserika Orthodoxa Romna" (The Roumanian Orthodox Church) as official organ of the Roumanian Patriarchate. It is issued monthly with a total edition of 10,750 copies. Its directorial board is composed of six members, each representing his diocese. The paper gives information about Church life in Roumania and abroad and deals with problems of historical and theological interest for the Church. Preservation of peace is one of its main tasks. The official part includes all declarations issued by the Church as well as news of administrative and cultural importance.

2) "Orthodoxia", a quarterly published in 10,750 copies. Its editors are all members of the theological institute in Bucarest. This periodical publishes mainly articles about the Christian faith and the right interpretation of Orthodoxy. The difference between the Orthodox Church and the other Christian Churches is presented in a spirit of true Christianity with the desire to contribute to the rapprochement between the nations. The book reviews include many publications issued abroad and among them a large number of ecumenical publications.

3) "Theological Studies", issued for theologians. Its 10 numbers in bookform represent the theological contribution of the Roumanian Orthodox Church today.

The other 5 papers are "Glasele Bisericii", issued by the diocese of Ungro Valachia as well as the periodicals of the dioceses of Jachkata, Rymnik and Ardjesh, the Banat and the archbishopric of Alba Julia and the bishopric of Kluuj and Orada. These periodicals also include sermons and articles of a more general theological and scientific character. Almanacs and calendars are also issued.

JUGOSLAVIA

Serbian Patriarch stresses "Unity" in message to Disciples of Christ

In a letter addressed to Dr. Robert Tobias of the Disciples of Christ Council on Christian Unity, Patriarch German of the Serbian Orthodox Church emphasized the need for unity among all Christians.

The Patriarch's message was in response to greetings sent him by the Council on the occasion of his elevation to the Patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church last autumn.

As published in "World Call" (Disciples of Christ Monthly) the Patriarch's message read, in part:

"Your telegram is very dear to me because I felt through it the beating of a friendly heart. Our repeated meetings have assured me that you, as well as myself, sincerely pray for the unity of the spirit and thoughts of all Christians and all the human race throughout the world. Only united may we beg for God's mercy in order to save the people of the world. Only spiritually united shall we give a real answer to the tasks given us by our positions of high service."

The Patriarch, who was formerly Secretary of the Holy Synod of his Church, has worked closely with the World Council of Churches and its members. Dr. Tobias was Director of the WCC inter-church aid programme in Orthodox countries for seven years, during which he became intimately acquainted with the new Patriarch.

MONGOLIA

13 Christians arrested in Mongolia

It has only now been divulged in Hongkong that 13 Christians were arrested last October in Inner Mongolia, an independent province of Communist China. Three of them were Protestants and ten Roman Catholics. They were accused of intrigues against the state. Reports have been received of similar arrests in other provinces of China during the second half of 1958.

USSR

Has the number of Christians increased since 1937?

It is impossible to obtain exact information about the total number of Christians in the USSR today, because no statistics are published about church-membership. The last census of religious opinion, which was in 1937, showed that there were more Christians than non-Christians. This is presumably one of the reasons why no exact figures are published in the Soviet Union concerning the religious affiliation of its citizens. In 1937 one-third of the total population in the towns stated that they believed in religion. In the rural districts two-thirds of the populations did so. Moreover it was only the active church-members who were included in the category of "Christians", because quite a large proportion of the people in the towns stated that they were indifferent to religion, or undecided.

During the last twenty years the percentage of Christians has not decreased. Although some of the older people who had been brought up in the Christian faith before the revolution have died, the gap has been filled by those who have joined the Church since the war.

Orthodox

The number of congregations in existence today is at least 22,000. This means that the very smallest congregations have an average of 2,000 members. These parishes are scattered, but the people regard themselves as members of the nearest village church. The priests who are in charge of these village churches cannot meet all the demands made upon them, because there are not enough of them. For instance, those in charge of the congregations of Kasan or Almaty are each responsible not only for 2,000 church-members but also for tens of thousands of people who are not members of the church. Facts like these show that it is impossible to estimate the total number of Christians in the USSR today.

USSR

How many church-members have renounced their Christian faith?

How many church-members have renounced their Christian faith in Soviet Russia today? No statistics are available. But the anti-religious propaganda is eager to announce every case which occurs. The number is relatively small. One can therefore conclude that the results of atheistic proselytism are small. People who have attached themselves to a Church do not easily break off their relationship with it. Two examples of how the anti-religious propaganda tries to use such cases for its own purposes are given here.

The "Rabotchaia Gazeta" (Kiev) reports on the ex-Orthodox priest Jakutchevitch. This man who had served his Church for 50 years became an atheist because he said religion keeps man away from work and prevents him from enjoying life. Jakutchevitch is reported as having declared that he now "wants to live and work for the collectivity which was impossible for him during the years of his church service."

Another case is described in the "Sovietskaia Moldavia", a daily paper issued in Kischinev (Moldavia). A woman T. Esina, a former member of the Baptist Church has applied "to work exclusively for the Soviet Nation", since she understands that "real progress is attainable only outside the Church." The churches and religious sects, she declared, are essentially opposed to all progress. "That is the reason why I left the Baptist Church, and I therefore urge all believers to follow my example."

USSR

The Moscow Patriarchate publishes a report on the activities of the Orthodox Church

A new book dealing with the organisation, position and activities of the Orthodox Church in Russia has appeared in Moscow. It is published in Russian, English, German, French, Spanish, Italian and Arabic.

In the preface Alexis, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, points out that the book "will enable many foreign readers to free themselves from prejudice about the position of the Orthodox Church in Russia and about its relations with the Soviet government."

During the war the Moscow Patriarchate published a book entitled "The Truth about the Church in Russia"; it contained information about the relations between Church and state in the USSR since the beginning of the war.

USSR

Growth in membership of Evangelical Christian Baptists in the Soviet Union

The membership of the Evangelical Christian Baptist churches in the Soviet Union is increasing by an average of 15,000 per annum, according to "Ekumeniczny Biuletyn Prasowy". At the Congress of European Baptists held in Berlin last August, Jacob Shidkow, President of the All-Soviet Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists, reported that during 1958 12,000 adult persons had already been baptised and received into membership. By the end of the year the membership of these churches would have risen to at least 545,000. The number attending the church services is much greater, and includes a large number of children.

USSR

200 Bibles sent to Armenia

The British and Foreign Bible Society in London has sent 200 Bibles in the Armenian Ararat version to Armenia.

USSR

News about the Ex-Uniate Churches in the
West of the USSR

News of the Ex-Uniate Church (formerly attached to the Church of Rome, and now integrated into the Church of Moscow) is scarce.

It is therefore interesting to glean some impressions about this remote area from the paper published by the Patriarchal Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church in America (No. 8, 1958).

The following paragraph is an extract from the diary written by American churchmen on their visit to the Orthodox Church of Russia. Their stay in the Soviet Union included a visit to Lvov, the ancient city which used to be the residence of the Metropolitan of the Uniate Church, A. Cheptizky. The diary explains how the Russian Orthodox Church deals with these Eastern Christians attached to the Moscow Patriarchate, now that the "Uniates" have been dissolved.

"Many efforts are being exerted to purify the cultus of divine service among the ex-Uniates. These efforts come not only from the higher levels, i.e. the Convocations of the hierarchs of the Western Ukraine which deliberate on matters needing attention in this respect and which issue edicts on matters of theological implication. Thus the Roman cult of "the Sacred Heart", the veneration of Latin and Uniate Saints, the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, processions with the Sacrament, the Latin doctrine on Purgatory, the Filioque, etc. have been abolished. The pastors of the Lvov city churches, for instance, have held services together, and have criticised each other's method of celebrating the services."

There is, generally speaking, a complete liturgical revival going on among these people, and each church tries to outdo the other in liturgical purity. Sometimes this goes too far; some churches are even adopting the Russian Orthodox chants and hymnology in general use, and discarding their own traditional chant forms, which are just as ancient. Much time is spent in correcting the Uniate service-books which are still in use. There is a shortage of Orthodox service-books to distribute to the churches, which would eliminate the Uniate books entirely. It is hoped that the Moscow Patriarchate will soon be able to re-issue all the books needed for the liturgical cycle. Despite the publication of the Russian Bible by the Patriarchate, a Ukrainian edition of the Bible is much needed in these parts. It must be remembered that before the last war there were all sorts of publications for the Uniates. These have all ceased. There is also great need for devotional literature, paper icons, etc. to meet the spiritual needs of the people.

At the time of our visit to Lvov there were 930 parishes in the Lvov-Ternopol Eparchy with about 1,300 churches. There were about 600 priests and 18 deacons. The Lvov-Ternopol Eparchy was divided into 70 Deaneries. These figures include districts which formerly belonged to the Volyn Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, i.e. parishes that were under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Warsaw between the two world wars.

It may be of interest to give some statistics about the reunited ex-Uniate churches and clergy. In May 1947 the total number of ex-Uniate clergy (including bishops, priests and deacons) in the Western Ukraine was 1,111. This figure included 23 priests who died in 1946/47. By January 1949, 44 more priests had united, and "since that time a few more unite periodically." A certain percentage of "hard-core" Uniates (chiefly Basilian monks) have refused to join the Orthodox Church and are engaged in secular work, although there are apparently a few parishes which are still Uniate. These figures do not include the total number of parishes, but only the ex-Uniate ones. Allowing for increases through ordination, and decreases through deaths, these figures are probably fairly accurate for today.

The government of the Eparchy is the same as in the Russian Church as a whole. The Lvov-Ternopol Eparchy follows the statutes adopted by the Church at the Russian Regional Sobor of 1945. The Archbishop rules the diocese himself, making all the decisions and issuing all the decrees personally.

One of the weak spots in the Eparchy is probably the facilities for training candidates for the priesthood. Before the last war there was an excellent Uniate Theological Academy in Lvov. Since the war the candidates for the priesthood are sent to the Lutsk Seminary in Volyn (West-Ukraine), to the Kiev Seminary, and elsewhere. There are a number of students at the Moscow Seminary and Academy and in Leningrad, as well as a great number of those taking correspondence courses. There is therefore a strong desire in Lvov to open a Seminary there. When we were in December 1955 there was some talk of opening a Seminary in connection with the tenth anniversary of the re-union of the Uniates in 1946. Nothing came of this either.

The first number of the "Eparchal Herald" (Eparkhial'nyi Visnik) appeared in January 1946, as the organ of the Lvov-Ternopol Eparchal Administration. By the time the February-March issue appeared (No. 2/3), the Sobor of March 1946 had been held and the Uniate dioceses no longer existed. This second number described the epoch-making events at the Sobor. In 1946 only five issues of the journal appeared.

Until the untimely death of Father Protopresbyter Gabriel Kostelnik on September 20th, 1948, after his return from the Moscow Conference, every issue of the journal contained one of his theological-polemical articles on the Roman Church. Since January 1947 the journal has appeared regularly, except during 1951 when only the first three issues appeared. It resumed publication in January 1952 and has continued regularly to the present time. With the issue of February 1948 (No. 2) the name of the journal was changed to "The Orthodox Herald" (Pravoslavnyj Visnik) and became "the publication of the Bishops of the Western Ukraine, Trans-Carpathia and Bukovina, under the direction of the Exarch of all the Ukraine, the Metropolitan of Kiev."

The total number of each issue printed was 3,000 copies. The Exarchate also publishes 20,000 copies of a Ukrainian ecclesiastical wall-calendar every year, four copies of which are sent to every church in the Western Ukraine.

USSR

The Level of Atheist Propaganda is too low

The struggle against religion has become apparent in Latvia, Lithuania and Esthonia.

In Latvia an article in the Communist Party organ, "Sovetskaia Latviia" stated that the Party "demands the constant unmasking of the reactionary political rôle and anti-scientific ideology of various religions and churches - the Catholic, the Lutheran, the Orthodox, the Jewish and various religious sects and groups".

"Sovetskaia Latviia" insists that the lack of anti-religious material in the press, radio, theatre and cinema should be remedied...

In Lithuania, too, the low level of atheist propaganda was criticised at the plenary session of the Communist Party's Central Committee. Reporting this on October 7, "Sovetskaia Litva" said that Lithuanian versions of atheist publications published by the Soviet Central Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge had appeared this year.

News of what really goes on in the Baltic States (Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania) is scarce. A refugee who arrived in the West recently said that his home town in southern Lithuania is served by only one church - the Catholic Church. The Orthodox Church is open, but it has no priest; the Protestant Church has been turned into a sports hall; the synagogue is being used as a weaving mill, and the second Catholic Church serves as a warehouse. He said that religious traditions were maintained, services were well attended and children were prepared for Communion, but atheist propaganda was conducted on a very extensive scale, particularly in high schools, and Communist youth officials were frequently seen near churches noting down the names of Komsomol members who went in.

Komsomol members who go to church in Esthonia have their names published in the press, followed by a derogatory account of their characters and school or work records. Notices of this kind may also be seen in the Lithuanian and Latvian Communist press.

USSR

Moscow admits American priest

The Foreign Office in the USA has now granted a visa valid three months to Archbishop Boris, the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. An American Roman Catholic priest, Louis F. Dion, will now go to Moscow to look after the spiritual welfare of some 150 American Catholics there. The Rev. L.F. Dion is the successor to Rev. Bissonnette whose entrance visa has not been renewed. The Rev. Dion arrived in Moscow on January 26th to celebrate his first mass at the French Embassy followed by a second mass at the American Embassy.

USSR

The Communist Party's attitude to Religion
taken from an article by D. Sidorov
("The Communist", No.7, 1958)

For the Communist Party the problem of religion is not an isolated question. The Party has always held the opinion that "the anti-religious struggle is absolutely essential for a successful solution of the crucial problems which confront the workers and their party in establishing socialist-communism." The greatest successes of the Party and of the people in transforming the social order from socialism to communism would have been inconceivable, "had it not succeeded in converting the majority of the workers to atheism."

Communist ideology, which has a scientific basis, has no place for "gods, angels, devils, etc." Religion is diametrically opposed to the ideals of Communism: it maintains that God controls the destinies of men, and that harvest, famine, war and peace, joy and sorrow are sent by Him. "Religion is therefore bound to oppose any attempt made by the workers to transform society, because it regards this as contrary to the will of God."

The religious concepts of the old world subsist, however, even after the bases for those concepts have gone. Another reason for the survival of religious notions is "that Soviet citizens have not yet gained complete control over nature." Lack of knowledge about certain natural phenomena still drives people into the arms of religion, which maintains such phenomena to be the will of God. And "religion spreads from house to house, a collection of phantastic illusions."

The fact that some of the people still cling obstinately to the concept of a non-existent God "has led the churches to change their tactics." Since the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union, and "the consequent exodus from the Church of the masses, the overwhelming majority of the clergy have ceased their opposition to Communist measures and to the government." They are now loyal to Soviet policy. During the war of defence (against Hitler) the religious associations in the USSR came forward with patriotic appeals; and since the war the clergy are constantly appealing for the maintenance of peace and the prevention of war. "Does this mean that the essential content of religion has changed? Has it reformed itself, or has it found its place in the struggle for Communism, as some politically-uninformed people imagine? No. Religion is still the expression of a reactionary way of thought, which upsets the ideas of the workers."

The new Communist structure requires the active cooperation of millions of people. But the Church tells them to wait for the life in the Hereafter. "That is why the anti-religious struggle is one of the most important tasks of the Communist Party."

Some of the party members and Soviet leaders are under the illusion that because the liquidation of the class-struggle has undermined the bases of the Church in the USSR, "there is no further need for energetic atheistic propaganda, because religion will die."

out of its own accord as Communism spreads." But this view "is diametrically opposed to Marxist-Leninism which insists on a relentless struggle against religious obscurantism."

The most important task in this struggle is scientific atheist propaganda, which must provide a scientific explanation for all the questions for which people seek answers in religion. But "the Communist Party advocates patience in dealing with religious prejudice", so as "to avoid hurting the feelings of believers."

In 1954 the Central Committee of the Communist Party again drew the attention of the party-leaders and the Communist press to the need for intensifying the ideological struggle against religion, and ceasing the neglect scientific-atheist propaganda. In spite of these clear directives from the Central Committee, the importance of scientific-atheist propaganda is still underestimated in many quarters; which has proved "beneficial to church people".

For instance every religious service today includes a sermon, "which aims at stimulating people's interest in religion." The clergy seize every opportunity (at baptisms, marriages, confession) to explain the "divine significance of these rites." The high dignitaries of the Church now "frequently visit the churches in their districts. Choir-singing is being extended, and many churches are being renovated at considerable expense."

In addition to the clergy, the laity also undertake "evangelism" and are specially trained for this task. The clergy have succeeded in persuading more people than before to attend services and religious rites such as marriages, baptisms, communion and confirmation. "Special attention is paid to influencing women and children."

Besides having personal conversations with individuals, the religious groups arrange many social evenings for young people, excursions, mass-meetings, musical events, etc. But "it would be a mistake to think that the number of Christians in the USSR is increasing. On the contrary, the technical achievements of socialism there have set in motion an irresistible process away from religion." This explains why "all the religious confessions are laying more stress upon the sermon, because they want to retain their hold on their members at all costs." Unfortunately "many of the organs of the Communist Party are still too passive about doing propaganda for atheism."

Atheist propaganda is more attractive and effective if it adopts various different methods. It might prove useful to hold conversations about the future earth-satellites, or to explain the origin of man through the discoveries of archaeology. Where it is difficult to arrange lectures, propaganda can be made on the radio, or through books.

The anti-religious struggle might be more successful "if it were more ardent about its ideology." A great responsibility lies upon Communists to carry out anti-religious propaganda. The Party programme "requires every Communist to be an atheist and an active

propagandist against religion." There "is no room in the Party for people with religious convictions." But some Communists "have begun to show tolerance towards religion and the Church." Party members often look on indifferently while priests inculcate their obscurantist ideas into the people, or arrange processions and religious festivals. Some Communists even "take part in these religious festivals themselves, which is quite incompatible with the reputation of a Party member." For instance Comrad Jefremov, Secretary of the Communist Party in the Stanov Kolchosa (Pskov) had his children baptised in church. Comrade Federova, Secretary of the Komsomol Association, got married in church. And in the Rossia Kolchosa (Tambov district) icons have been seen in the homes of Communists, for instance in the house of Kostin, the Communist leader of a dairy farm. Kostin says, "My mother put the icons there; I have nothing to do with it." A Communist like that "cannot convince anyone, if he cannot even prevent his own family from being so silly as to believe in God!" Who is going to listen to a Communist "who advocates promoting the anti-religious struggle at Party meetings, and then lets the priest visit his house?" The excuse given is that such Communists have to show consideration for the feelings of their family, otherwise things would be very difficult for them, especially in rural districts. They swear that they don't believe in God, but "they attend the church festivals so as to avoid quarrelling with their wives, fathers, or mothers." An opportunist attitude of this kind is unworthy of a true Communist.

USSR

Why does religion still survive in the Soviet Union?

The "Krasnaia Zvezda", the Russian army newspaper, publishes the following answers to questions raised by two members of the armed forces.

Question: "Why does religion still survive in the Soviet Union?"

Answer (given by F. Oleschchuk, the well-known pioneer in godless propaganda): the predominant ideology in the USSR is atheistic Marxist-Leninism. Religious superstition does, however, still survive, and the number of believers is even increasing. In some places young people receive religious instruction. But in the armed forces it is very unusual to find "believers". Religion does a lot of harm because it prevents the believer from "deriving proper advantage from the achievements of Soviet culture". It prevents the masses of the people from "actively participating in the promotion of Communism."

According to Oleschchuk, religion "makes people unsure of themselves and in their own power." It undermines their energy and initiative.

Christianity preaches non-violence. "If this principle had been followed in the October Revolution, the Russian people would still be the victims of exploitation today."

It is not true, however, to think that all "believers" are hostile to Communism, and therefore politically unreliable. Nevertheless "honourable workers in town and country" could not be "sterling promoters of Communism" if they held religious ideas.

"Traditions which are thousands of years old" have been preserved in religion. For "religion is the most conservative form of social consciousness."

Another reason why religion has not yet been eradicated is "that Socialism has not yet attained its highest achievements." This explains "why the process is a slow one."

The Churches "exploit the right to freedom of conscience guaranteed in the Constitution in order to carry on religious propaganda." But even they are endeavouring to eliminate from religion any concepts which have been disproved by science.

The influence still exercised by the capitalist world on believers in the USSR must not be forgotten either. Imperialism turns religion to its own uses, in order to disintegrate socialism by impregnating it with religious-mystical tendencies, which have an influence on vacillating characters.

"The strongest antidote" to religious influences is "Communist morality". Ultimately the overcoming of religious prejudices depends on the development of the economic basis of Communism, the productive forces of society, and the creation of a superfluity of material goods. / "The surest way of achieving this is to draw more and more people into the process of production." These efforts "culminate in the struggle against religion and the spread of the ideology of materialism." In this process the feelings of the believers must not be hurt. "The final victory of Soviet science is already in sight, as it advances from success to success."

USSR

On earth as in heaven

The 7th number of "Voprosy Filosofii" (Problems of Philosophy), 1958, contains an article on "The Importance of the Conquest of the Cosmos for scientific purposes". The gist of the article may be summed up as follows.

Events on earth today are not determined "by unknown celestial forces". On the 40th anniversary of the great October Revolution "a heavenly body created by human hands for the first time took its place among the stars."

Formerly the cosmos was represented as created and governed by God. The "heavens" determined the fate of men (religion, astrology), and men feared "the punishment of heaven". Earth was completely under the domination of heaven.

According to the article, celestial phenomena like meteorites, storms, etc. are represented as natural occurrences for which there is a scientific explanation. The author stresses the fact that

there is no dialectical antithesis between what is "celestial" and what is "earthly", both being expressions of "the same cosmic event".

Thanks to the October Revolution, the concept of time and space has changed. Karl Marx, Engels and others are quoted in support of the new theories. Mention is made of the inadequacy of all "ontological and gnoseological attempts at proof", especially in connection with the question of "localising God in heaven" and "localising human life on earth".

God did not create man in His own image. It is man who imagines God to be like himself. "Even a barbarian cannot describe something he has created himself as divine. It is therefore impossible for people today, who are liberated from barbarism, to describe celestial phenomena as divine".

The history of society and of the development of civilisation is the proof of man's triumph over the impenetrability of the cosmos.

Today a product of Soviet science has become a meteorite, an object for observation by astronomers. For the first time in history an earthly body - a product of the human will - has "become a heavenly body". Today it is evident that "everything earthly is both earthly and heavenly", i.e. that "man lives in heaven."

The distinction between heaven and earth has lost its former significance. There is no longer any difference between what is "above" and what is "beneath".

The rockets which have been launched into the cosmos are significant in another way also, for scientific atheism: they prove that "the origin of movement is mechanical". Dynamic force must therefore be "mechanical in origin, not divine"; this is contrary to the ideas of Aristoteles, Galileo or Newton who believed the ultimate climax of reality to be God.

"For scientific atheism it is important that different branches of modern technical science (atomic energy, reactivity, etc.) have achieved cosmic importance, and thus fulfil cosmic functions which were formerly attributed to God."

USSR

New Critical commentary on the Bible in Soviet Russia

A new critical edition of the Bible will appear shortly in the Soviet Union. As the announcement says "it will serve believers and unbelievers among the Soviet citizens". The edition will contain 150 000 copies.

This volume of 408 pages deals critically with the Old and New Testaments offering "commentaries from a purely scientific point of view". It will be one of the essential publications of this year's anti-religious propaganda. (See also p. 34)

USSR

Reactionary use of art for religious purposes

Lenin already drew attention to the fact that religion (i.e. the various Christian churches) have always made use of art for religious purposes. This kind of art must therefore be regarded as reactionary.

"Sowjetskaia Kultura", in its edition of October 30th, 1958, makes this reactionary form of art the target of an article against religion, in which it describes "the beauty of the Christian rite" as a deliberate reversion to the Middle Ages.

This applies most of all to the Vatican. In the USA the Catholic Church acts in the same way; there are a large number of Catholic groups and associations there for the promotion of art in religious services. One of these groups produced a film entitled "the Miracle of Fatima" which was extremely popular. Similar religious films are produced in Italy, France and Spain.

One of the most popular writers on Catholic art (continues the paper) is Gabriel Marcel (l'Horizon). He appeals for the cooperation of artists who "will give the aristocratic principle of the spirit precedence over the real principle of matter."

In the USA (says the paper) many Lutherans and Baptists are also promoting religious art. They insist especially that music is "the noblest means of leading non-believers to religious faith". These people regard "the idea of personality as divine" (writes "Sowjetskaia Kultura"). They expect the composers and other artists "to praise and worship God as Creator of the universe."

But the reactionary pseudo-aesthetic movement of today contains many people who do not belong to the churches. They make use of heathen mythology which they consider an adequate means of influencing the masses as a form of anti-materialist propaganda.

This group includes the representatives of "abstract art" who claim to be "neutral and objective in their ideology", and not "directly anti-materialistic". It also includes "abstract art which is nothing but a furtive attempt to contest the objectivity of being", to deny the real phenomena of life and man's capacity to be conscious of that objectivity of the world." It also includes abstract form of art intended to arouse mystical sensations in those who look at it."

Ideologically this category includes the English historian Professor Toynbee, whose concern is also "to liberate man from science and technics in order to lead him to God." The French philosopher Maritain has the same aim in his writings. So has Santaiana, the Indian "apologetist of spiritual imperialism", whose "reactionary aestheticism is to be regarded as a refined expression of fundamental religiosity". Santaiana's pragmatism does not maintain that religion is the truth, but cynically demands "that religious faith should be regarded as useful."

Similar views to those expressed by the paper "Sowjetskaia Kultura" are also held by the "Gazeta Krakowska" in Cracow (Poland), which gives similar reasons for opposing "the aesthetic structure of the Catholic Church."

USSR

Priest turns atheist

A former priest, Pavel Darmansky of Leningrad, who broadcast over Moscow Radio on April 3, on "How I broke with religion", returned to the microphone on October 7 to reply to critics and to thank supporters.

A number of people attacked him; some pointed out that many people were unable to understand everything recorded under the heading of religion but still firmly believed in God.

Darmansky argued that all religions were alike in being false and that the existence of different trends made them "contradict one another". He maintained that everything was explicable by science. The fact that some outstanding scientists and philosophers believed simply meant that they were misguided.

Replying to the interviewer, Darmansky affirmed "incredible joy" now that he had given up religion.

There are other examples of the eagerness of the Soviet Communists to find a more subtle form of propaganda than the dull and unconvincing lectures which form the bulk of their atheistic propaganda. A story on "The Miracle-Working Icon" by the writer Tendriakov has been praised by the Soviet Press, despite the fact that the story contains as many arguments against anti-religious policy as patently exaggerated descriptions of religion.

Tendriakov's story concerns the situations which developed after a twelve year-old village boy found an icon reputed to be miracle-working. Communism is represented by a teacher who is prepared to disrupt the life of the family, if not to upset the whole village, so as to save the boy from religion. But a great many of the villagers are fervently religious. Apart from the fresh upsurge of religion aroused by the icon, the parish supports a priest although the church has been closed. The local Party secretary even suggests that it would be better to reopen the church, since the people persist in walking a long way to the nearest religious services.

USSR

"Not a personal affair"

The "Sovetskaia Rossiia", Communist Party organ of the Russian Republic (RSFSR) published the following story. Baidal, the foreman of a brickworks and a firm Communist, was utterly unable to combat his wife's religion and appealed to the secretary of the Party works bureau. A woman Communist was sent to the wife, but had no success. Baidal was then reprimanded and ordered to convert his wife. He made no progress and wrote despairingly to "Sovetskaia

Rossia", Investigations were made, and the paper considered that Baidal "is grievously at fault both as head of the family and as a Communist. He has proved himself to be a weak, unprincipled person... He deserves censure but ... it is hardly likely that even the Party bureau secretary himself believes Baidal will re-educate his wife within two or three months."

The trouble was that the wife had strong supporters, and Party propaganda had been weak. "It is our duty to wage a real ideological struggle against religion... employing all forms of Communist propaganda. The discord in Baidal's family must not be considered his personal affair."

USSR

What does science say about death?

An article on the problem of death appeared on October 25th in the paper "Sovetskaia Moldavie" in the Moldavian Socialist Republic, entitled "Science and Religion on Life and Death". It contained fundamental considerations, regarding death not as the conclusion of a sinful life but as a natural end to human life, and not in any way determined by "the impenetrable decrees of God".

Life and death are not mutually exclusive. Life goes on, because new cells are built up all the time.

In the struggle for the victory of materialism over religion, the attempts to bring people back to life are very important. When the heart stops beating the human organism enters a state of "minimum aliveness" which lasts from five to ten minutes. During this time life can sometimes be restored. But nothing can prevent biological death, which is finally inevitable. The religious doctrine of "life after death" is powerless against it, and every believer should be clear on this point.

USSR

Can we foresee the future?

This is the title of a pamphlet written by V.A. Mezontsev. Its publication shows that Soviet people are interested "in the right interpretation of the future." A Soviet man can interpret the future only under certain conditions.

"You can understand the future in different ways. Astrology, a superficial scientific approach and the religious interpretations are some of them. But these interpretations are not certain. The only certain interpretation is Communist ideology based on Leninism. Soviet people must follow the general line of Leninism if they want to face the future calmly. The only way to approach the future is the way based on the wonderful plans of reconstruction prepared by Communism, because the wisdom of the Communist party is the guarantee of a happy future."

USSR

Restoration of Churches

The Church is pleased that its historic buildings are being systematically restored by the public authorities. It regards this as a confirmation of the fact that its historic task is not yet completed, in spite of changed conditions.

Legally the Church demands nothing for itself. But (through its active participation as a Church) it is ready to help to build up the future of Russia in accordance with the Soviet régime, because it believes it as something essential which it must contribute. Furthermore experience shows that some of the visitors to "museum-churches" are attracted by the Church. Most of these visitors behave reverently, whispering as if they were in a real church.

Even if the old centres where God was worshipped are turned into museums, what matters is that they should be preserved. For they will remind future generations of the faith of their forefathers.

The following article in the "Literaturnaia Gazeta" on the appalling conditions in the reconstruction of the town of Pskov stresses the riches of Russian history.

The "Literaturnaia Gazeta" writes: "The ancient town of Pskov, the Cradle of Russian soil, is still unique today. In the midst of the new buildings and blooming gardens one suddenly comes across an old belfry or the golden cupolas of a wonderful old church, side by side with a modern electricity-works". The people of Pskov "are in love with their town". They love its old grey walls, the old Kremlin with its churches and chapels "which reveal our ancestors' love of art". Pskov enjoys a place of honour among the ancient towns of Russia because "it is laid out on a systematic plan." "In the centre is the church of St. Sergius, built in the 16th century." When people catch sight of it today "they remain rooted to the spot."

Its walls are riddled with shellshot and the only part of it which has been restored is used as a garage. Close by is the "Old Church of the Resurrection". Its entrance-door is blocked up and the church itself has been abandoned to decay. "It is extraordinary that its restoration cannot be included in the plans for reconstructing the town."

At the entrance to the Kremlin, in the old "Princes' Square", a cinema is being built. "A more unsuitable site could not be imagined", comments the paper. Not only does the cinema block the view of the Kremlin. It stands at a cross-roads where the traffic has become so heavy that pedestrians go there as little as possible. In the opinion of the comrades on the town council "the monuments of the past" are a special province, whereas "the cinema is a cultural establishment". That is why a big cinema is being built on this unique site clearly "in order to express defiance of the church."

The Odigitrii church on the high bank of the river "Velikaia" dates from the first half of the 16th century. Although badly damaged during the war, its ornaments have been preserved and are of particular historical value. But after the war no one thought of "saving this beautiful and unique church from falling into ruin". Last year "its roof fell in and the ornaments, which were irreplaceable, were destroyed".

The town council's attitude was "incredibly indifferent". They simply said, "Now it's time to have the Odigitrii church pulled down". And it would have been pulled down too, if the Ministry of Soviet Russia had not intervened. The Ministry decreed that, "since Pskov had suffered more than any other town during the war, the restoration of its art-treasures must receive urgent priority". The government "allocated 3 million roubles for this purpose, which have now been wasted." Instead of saving the priceless treasures of old ecclesiastical architecture, one of the destroyed towers was rebuilt "but so badly that it very soon fell in again". While the money allocated for the restoration of the world-famous ornaments of Meletiv Cathedral is wasted "in rebuilding a tower which is not of the slightest interest", irreplaceable buildings of unique historical interest "are allowed to fall into ruin and lost for ever to the Russian people."

Even the architects who had been appointed to carry out the work of restoration were "diverted to other work". Volunteers offered "to do the work free of charge", but it was no use.

"Posterity will never forgive us for allowing these irreplaceable treasures to be lost" (concludes the article).

USSR

Soviet papers comment on the Papacy

Moscow (Trud) According to legend Jesus Christ was born in a barn, whereas the Apostle Peter, the first pope of the Roman Catholic Church, was a humble fisherman. The late pope, the 61st Holy Father, Prince Eugenio Pacelli, was not born in a barn and is not a humble fisherman...

Crowds of foreign tourists arrive in Rome every day visiting the Vatican and listen to sermons and speeches delivered in the different halls and churches. They probably do not realize that they meet one of the richest men of the world. The pope is the boss of wealthy banks, the owner of large residential districts and agricultural areas all over the world, as well as of many slum houses in the city of Rome. His wealth is growing because of the growing number of miserable men and women exploited by him, "people born in barns". The pope and his cardinals drive in luxurious cars, which bear the initials 'KCHU' (in English) 'ICHK'). People in Rome give these initials the following explanation: ICHK "If Christ knew".

USSR

The Roman Catholic Church and present-day ecumenical movements, in the light of Marxism

The latest number of the Communist paper "Voprosy Filosofii" contains a review of W. von Loewenich's book, "Der moderne Katholizismus" (Luther Verlag, Witten, Essen, 1956).

In this book the author deals with the problem of ecumenism. The reviewer mentions the conditions under which a fusion might take place between Protestantism and Catholicism, but says, these conditions have not yet been fulfilled. "The way to ecumenical Christianity consists in developing to the full the special nature of each church."

The emphasis on the concept of supra-confessionalism in every church today (continues the review) is extremely important, because "some day perhaps measures may be taken to bring about certain fusions."

With regard to the Roman Church, with which von Loewenich's book is concerned, the Moscow paper comments as follows: "His analysis of the history of Catholicism leads the author to the conclusion that the expression "contemporary Catholicism" is misleading, and should therefore not be used. This "contemporary Catholicism" is the same old "mediaeval Catholicism" which still subsists under modern conditions. One should therefore speak of "20th century Catholicism" (not of "contemporary Catholicism").

The "Voprosy Filosofii" expresses regret that von Loewenich does not give a full analysis of Catholicism. It says, his book is merely "a theological tract in secular form ... The author says nothing about a series of circumstances which are characteristic of Catholicism, such as the alliance between the Catholic Church and the monopolistic bourgeoisie", nor does anything in the book indicate "that the Roman Church itself is a great capitalist power, which is anxious to maintain the dying bourgeois régime."

USSR

"The Bible for believers and non-believers"

This is the title of one of the latest books published by atheist propaganda in the USSR. It is an enlarged edition of a book published in 1938, edited by E. Jaroslavskij, during the period of struggle against religion. It contains some re-prints of articles which appeared in "Bezbozhnik" (The Godless), a wellknown atheist paper at that time.

The purpose of this new edition, as an instrument of atheist propaganda, is to help believers to liberate themselves from religious obscurantism. But the book deals exclusively with the Old Testament, mainly with the Books of Moses. The headings of the chapters are very illuminating. The chapter on Leviticus chapter 11, is headed "A Menu of Dishes for all Centuries". In this chapter the dietetic regulations prescribed for the oriental peoples for hygienic reasons/denuded of their justification. Because "these are

regulations aim at determining the consciousness of the believers". "We Marxists, on the contrary, have always emphasised that reality is not determined by human consciousness; but human consciousness is determined by reality".

Another chapter is entitled "How God works as a doctor". Here the methods of curing diseases in the East are explained. One sentence sums up what is said. "in accordance with the biblical commandment, the church has to charge less to poor people."

But if a man is poor and in need, he still has to bring a ram for sacrifice. "Then the same comedy is always enacted. The priest slaughters the animal, in order to carry out the ceremony of unction. He then anoints the right ear, the right thumb, the big toe on the right foot, and the palm of the left hand."

In the section entitled "God will not tolerate any criticism" the book quotes Jaroslaskij in affirming that even in the remote past tens of thousands of people probably realised that the priests were a complete hoax. The story of the feeding of the Children of Israel during their flight from Egypt is entitled "Manna from heaven and roast game".

Another chapter, also taken from "Bezbochnik" of 1923, deals with "the value of lice, bugs, cockroaches and similar creatures of God", while the chapter entitled "God's Perfunery" describes the different essences which have been used in the churches from time immemorial for liturgical purposes, and which are still used today.

USSR

New Year Sermon preached in Moscow by Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsi and Kolomna

The Metropolitan based his sermon on Psalm 70: 5: "O God, Thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying," taking as his text the words of St. Paul, "The time is short" (I. Corinthians 7: 29).

He referred to the many fellow-Christians who have passed on this year into the life eternal. For all men must die. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

The Metropolitan went on to ask, "which of us had done anything during the past year to deserve eternal life ... How are we preparing ourselves for redemption in eternity?"

Nothing can prevent people from "fulfilling the most urgent Christian commandments ... in order to be real Christians ... Our duties and responsibilities in society do not claim the whole of our time ... Let us recall the Early Christians who lived as true Christians even in the service of the Roman army and at the court of the pagan emperors ... The Lord shows us our way. He is the

inexhaustible source of merciful help for all those who seek redemption, all who are weary and heavy-laden. Those who live through faith in God feel the strong hand of the heavenly Father through the influence of the Holy Spirit ... taking His children in His arms like an earthly father."

If "we have under-estimated this help, let us do everything during the time that remains, to make up for what we have failed to do."

Let us never forget that our salvation lies in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that the only way to eternal life is the Christian life with Christ."